

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
BEAUMONT DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	§	
	§	
	§	
VS.	§	CASE NO. 1:11-CR-52
	§	
	§	
CHRISTOPHER JAMES GARDNER	§	

FINDINGS OF FACT AND RECOMMENDATION ON GUILTY PLEA
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

By order of the District Court, this matter is referred to the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge for administration of the guilty plea under Rule 11. Magistrate judges have the statutory authority to conduct a felony guilty plea proceeding as an “additional duty” pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(3). United States v. Bolivar-Munoz, 313 F.3d 253, 255 (5th Cir. 2002).

On September 15, 2011, this cause came before the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge for entry of a guilty plea by the Defendant, Christopher James Gardner, to **Count One** of the **Indictment**. Count One of the Indictment alleges that on or about March 19, 2011, in the Eastern District of Texas, Christopher James Garnder, Defendant, having been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year, to wit: Sexual Assault, a felony, on June 13, 2003, in cause number B010191-R, in the 163rd District Court of Orange County, Texas, and Possession of a Controlled Substance, a felony, on August 31, 2007, in cause number B070518-R, in the 163rd District Court of Orange County, Texas, did knowingly possess in and affecting interstate commerce, a firearm, to wit: one (1) Ruger, Model P90, .45 caliber pistol, bearing serial

number 661-40203, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(g)(1).

Defendant, Christopher James Gardner, entered a plea of guilty to Count One of the Indictment into the record at the hearing. After conducting the proceeding in the form and manner prescribed by Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 11 the Court finds:

a. That Defendant, after consultation with his attorney, has knowingly, freely and voluntarily consented to the administration of the guilty plea in this cause by a United States Magistrate Judge in the Eastern District of Texas subject to a final approval and imposition of sentence by the District Court.

b. That Defendant and the Government have entered into a plea agreement which was disclosed and addressed in open court, entered into the record, and placed under seal.

c. That Defendant is fully competent and capable of entering an informed plea, that Defendant is aware of the nature of the charges and the consequences of the plea, and that the plea of guilty is made freely, knowingly, and voluntarily. Upon addressing the Defendant personally in open court, the Court determines that Defendant plea is voluntary and did not result from force, threats or promises (other than the promises set forth in the Plea Agreement). See FED. R. CRIM. P. 11(b)(2).

d. That Defendant's knowing and voluntary plea is supported by an independent factual basis establishing each of the essential elements of the offense and Defendant realizes that his conduct falls within the definition of the crimes charged under 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1).

STATEMENT OF REASONS

As factual support for Defendant's guilty plea, the Government presented a factual basis. See Factual Basis and Stipulation. In support, the Government would prove that Defendant, Christopher

James Gardner, is one and the same person charged in the Indictment and that the events described in the Indictment occurred in the Eastern District of Texas and elsewhere. The Government would also have proven, beyond a reasonable doubt, each and every essential element of the offense as alleged in Count One of the Indictment through the testimony of witnesses, including expert witnesses, and admissible exhibits. In support of the Defendant's plea, the Court incorporates the proffer of evidence described in detail in the factual basis and stipulation, filed in support of the plea agreement.

Defendant, Christopher James Gardner, agreed with and stipulated to the evidence presented in the factual basis. Counsel for Defendant and the Government attested to Defendant's competency and capability to enter an informed plea of guilty. The Defendant agreed with the evidence presented by the Government and personally testified that he was entering his guilty plea knowingly, freely and voluntarily.

RECOMMENDED DISPOSITION

IT IS THEREFORE the recommendation of the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge that the District Court accept the Guilty Plea of Defendant which the undersigned determines to be supported by an independent factual basis establishing each of the essential elements of the offense charged in **Count One** of the **Indictment**. The Court also recommends that the District Court defer accepting the plea agreement until the District Court has reviewed the presentence

report.¹ Accordingly, it is further recommended that Defendant, Christopher James Gardner, be finally adjudged guilty of the charged offense under Title 18, United States Code, Sections 922(g)(1).

The District Court should defer its decision to accept or reject the plea agreement until there has been an opportunity to consider the presentence report. See FED. R. CRIM. P. 11(c)(3). If the Court rejects the plea agreement, the Court will advise Defendant in open court that it is not bound by the plea agreement and Defendant will have the opportunity to withdraw his guilty plea. If the plea agreement is rejected and Defendant still persists in the guilty plea, the disposition of the case may be less favorable to Defendant than that contemplated by the plea agreement. Defendant is ordered to report to the United States Probation Department for the preparation of a presentence report. Defendant has the right to allocute before the District Court before imposition of sentence.

OBJECTIONS

Objections must be: (1) specific, (2) in writing, and (3) served and filed within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy of this report. See 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 1(a), 6(b), and 72(b). A party's failure to object bars that party from: (1) entitlement to de novo review by a district judge of proposed findings and recommendations, see Rodriguez v. Bowen, 857 F.2d 275, 276-77 (5th Cir. 1988), and (2) appellate review, except on grounds of plain error of

¹“(3) Judicial Consideration of a Plea Agreement.

(A) To the extent the plea agreement is of the type specified in Rule 11(c)(1)(A) or (C), the court may accept the agreement, reject it, or defer a decision until the court has reviewed the presentence report.

(B) To the extent the plea agreement is of the type specified in Rule 11(c)(1)(B), the court must advise the defendant that the defendant has no right to withdraw the plea if the court does not follow the recommendation or request.

(4) Accepting a Plea Agreement. If the court accepts the plea agreement, it must inform the defendant that to the extent the plea agreement is of the type specified in Rule 11(c)(1)(A) or (C), the agreed disposition will be included in the judgment.

(5) Rejecting a Plea Agreement. If the court rejects a plea agreement containing provisions of the type specified in Rule 11(c)(1)(A) or (C), the court must do the following on the record and in open court (or, for good cause, in camera):

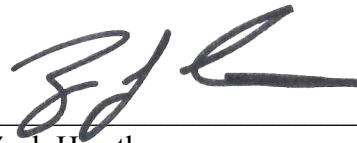
(A) inform the parties that the court rejects the plea agreement;

(B) advise the defendant personally that the court is not required to follow the plea agreement and give the defendant an opportunity to withdraw the plea; and

(C) advise the defendant personally that if the plea is not withdrawn, the court may dispose of the case less favorably toward the defendant than the plea agreement contemplated.” FED. R. CRIM. P. 11(c)(3)-(5).

unobjected-to factual findings and legal conclusions accepted by the district court, see Douglass v. United Servs. Auto. Ass'n., 79 F.3d 1415, 1417 (5th Cir. 1996) (en banc). The constitutional safeguards afforded by Congress and the courts require that, when a party takes advantage of his right to object to a magistrate's findings or recommendation, a district judge must exercise its nondelegable authority by considering the actual evidence and not merely by reviewing and blindly adopting the magistrate's report and recommendation. See Hernandez v. Estelle, 711 F.2d 619, 620 (5th Cir. 1983); United States v. Elsoffer, 644 F.2d 357, 359 (5th Cir. 1981) (per curiam).

SIGNED this 20th day of September, 2011.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Zack Hawthorn', written over a horizontal line.

Zack Hawthorn
United States Magistrate Judge